

Contributions

A BETTER THING

C. H. WETHERBE

What is better than office or titles is thorough, uprightness of character, and hence practical fidelity to one's duties, whatever sphere they may lie in. Too many people are attracted by official station and by high-sounding titles, paying deference to such things rather than to sterling manhood and womanhood. Rev. L. A. Banks says, "A few years after the war military titles were very cheap and common. A story is told of an old farmer who had a considerable number of men at work in his hay-field. A traveler, stopping to converse with the farmer, was interested in the latter's remark, that most of his men were old soldiers. 'Indeed! Are any of them officers?' 'Two of them. One of them, over there, was a private, and that fellow beyond was a major, and that man, away over in the corner, was a colonel.' 'Indeed! Are they good men.' 'Well,' said the farmer, 'that private is a first-class man, and the corporal is pretty good, too.' 'But how about the major and the colonel?' 'The major is so-so,' said the farmer. 'But the colonel.' 'Well,' answered the farmer, 'I ain't a-going to say a word against a man who was a colonel in the war, but I've made up my mind to one thing—I ain't a-going to hire any brigadier generals!'" The old farmer seems to have thought that official titles did not amount to anything unless there was true character and efficiency behind them. This country is cursed by a large number of poor characters in good offices. A good, honest, common Christism is worth more to the church than a small, tricky doctor of divinity.

THE FUTURE OF ASHLAND COLLEGE

R. R. TEETER

In considering the future of Ashland College it will be well to investigate the present conditions and future prospects of other denominational colleges as well. One cannot come at the facts concerning many things without relying upon the investigations of others to a certain extent. And I have found much information in an article by Mr. W. A. Curtis, in a recent number of the "Independent" from which I wish to quote quite freely. The article to which I refer is entitled, "The Decline of Denominational Colleges," dealing especially with those of the west.

If it is true that denominational colleges are languishing in many instances and the causes can be pointed out, may not it be true also that Ashland College may be shielded from or rather snatched from the same dangers and thus its career made more sure and successful?

In many instances the decline is laid at the door of the State Universities, and certainly as the number of students enrolled at the different denominational institutions is compared, the State institution does seem to be stealing the students from the denominational colleges. But bad as the showing is from such a comparison, it is far better, according to Mr. Curtis, than if we were to compare the scientific equipment and libraries and their condition and value. In connection with this a number of institutions are cited that are steadily on the decline, whose buildings are in a state of decay, whose endowments do not increase, but rather shrink, and whose equipments have degenerated.

Certainly poverty is the canker gnawing at the vitals of many denominational colleges, and it is the vampire sucking the very life blood from our own.

Is Ashland College to have a future? Yes, but what shall that future be? Shall it be a future spent in an almshouse or shall it be a future of magnificence and power?

It depends almost entirely upon the impetus it shall receive during the present decade. I have no fantastic dreams of the, to be acquired, untold wealth and matchless splendor of Ashland's future, nor do I wish to see it handicapped by conditional endowments of millions, but this I do wish, that the members of the Brethren church awaken to the fact that it must have a better financial support from those who wish to see its success. Ever since I can remember hearing the affairs of the college discussed I have heard the question, "Will it ever become self-supporting?" And I think I have heard it answered affirmatively. But I say no. It never will become self-supporting unless you call it self-support to keep within the income of an endowment.

But this fact is no discredit to the school, but rather an honor. No college intended to reach the masses can live upon the income from students tuition except a regular teachers normal, such as Ada, O., or Valparaiso, Ind. And graduates from such do not have the standing of graduates from smaller but more thorough colleges.

A brother said to me recently that if Ashland cannot live without an endowment it will die. And it would if no one valued a higher education any more than he.

Yes, to insure a successful future the college must be endowed, especially the department that is to equip the future ministers of the church. And this equipment should not be confined to a short Bible course. Other denominations find it to their advantage to make a considerable outlay in securing their supply of ministers. A minister of the U. B. church in Ohio said to me that

each minister graduating from their seminaries costs the church eight hundred dollars. Not until the Brethren church as a people is willing to make some considerable sacrifice in furnishing the means whereby its ministry can receive a preparation that will make them able to stand unabashed along side of ministers of other denominations, has it a right to demand any great sacrifices from its ministers.

Each year is the church demanding more from its ministers than it did the year before, and the man who has had even a classical training, but has not kept abreast of the advancing times finds that his congregation is not dragging along behind him, but has slipped on in advance and has shaken off the hold he formerly had upon the people. I am made to realize more and more with each new experience, that in order to reach the people and do successful Christian work, a man must be more than able to read the English Bible, in a fashion, and to exhort the people, as the apology is so often put, in a "weak and broken way." In the present age, I do not believe there is any excuse for one to be set up as a leader of the people who can not express himself in good King's English at least. And the present age of thorough high school and college training has placed the boys and girls in a position where, in order to be led into a religious life they must be led by those whose accomplishments are at least equal to theirs.

One of the most remarkable men that the age of the Commonwealth produced in England was Richard Baxter, who very clearly recognized the truths I have just stated. He dwells in an instructive way on the pains he took to make his sermons useful and attractive. He says, "I ordered my discourse in a way suitable to the great end, and yet so as I might suit their dispositions and diseases. The things which I daily opened to them and with the greatest importunity labored to imprint upon their minds were the great fundamental principles of Christianity. Yet I did usually put something in my sermon which was above their own discovery, and which they had not known before; and this I did that they might be kept humble, and still perceive their ignorance, and be willing to be kept in a learning state. For when preachers tell their people no more than they know, and do not show them that they excel them in knowledge, and scarcely overtop them in ability, the people will be tempted to turn preachers themselves, and think that they have learned all that their ministers can teach them, and are as wise as they.

They will be apt to condemn their teachers, and wrangle with all their doctrines, to their own undoing and to the disturbance of the church. . . . I